

**REMARKS**

The Examiner's final Office Action dated May 21, 2002 has been received and its contents carefully noted. The Applicants respectfully submit that this response is timely filed and fully responsive to the Office Action. Claims 1-6, previously withdrawn from prosecution due to a restriction requirement, have been canceled. Claims 21, 22, 24, and 32-38 are currently pending in the application with Claims 21 and 22 being amended.

In the Office Action, claims 21, 22, 24 and 32-34, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. Additionally, claims 21, 22, 24 and 32-34, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

Applicants respectfully submit that in view of the amendments to the claims, provided above, this rejection is now rendered moot. Specifically, claims 21 and 22 have been amended to indicate that the metal "retains its conductivity even after the metal is oxidized." Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that, by the foregoing amendments to claims 21 and 22, the claim language has been clarified and, therefore request that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, first and second paragraphs of claims 21 and 22, as well as claims 24 and 32-34 (due to their dependency on claim 21) be withdrawn.

On page 4 of the outstanding Office Action, claims 21, 22, 24, 33 and 35-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a/e), as being anticipated by the teachings of Soininen et al. (Pub. Appl. '293), and claim 27 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), as being obvious in view

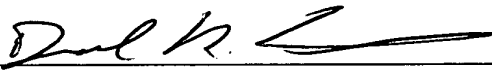
of the teachings of Soininen et al.(Pub. Appl. '293). Each of these rejections is respectfully traversed for the reasons provided below.

Applicants note that the filing date of the cited Soininen reference is May 15, 2001. However, the priority date of the present application is August 24, 2000. Accompanying this response is a verified translation of the priority document of the present application (Japanese patent application 2000-253794) as well as a declaration indicating that the translated document is a true English translation of Japanese patent application 2000-253794. Applicants submit that independent claims 21 and 35 (as well as their respective dependent claims 24, 32-34 and 36-38) find support in the priority document. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the claim for priority has been perfected. Thus, Applicants submit that the Soininen reference is no longer a valid reference with regard to the present application. Applicants request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise, which could be eliminated through discussions with Applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to

contact the undersigned by telephone in order that the further prosecution of this application can thereby be expedited. Any overage or shortage in the required payment should be applied to Deposit Account No. 19-2380 (740819-616).

Respectfully submitted,

  
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